

## 'Operation Alert'

By Peter Edson



FROM June 15 to 17, newspaper readers will see a strange dateline in the columns of their favorite dailies. It will be something like: INFORMATION HEADQUARTERS, OPERATION ALERT, 1955—

Radio news broadcasts and tele-newscasts will also purport to be coming from this same mysterious location.

It will be strictly a "SOMEWHERE IN AMERICA" dateline.

Its exact location is more or less of an open secret. But to carry out the fiction that Washington has been atom- or H-bombed out of existence and that the President and all the big shots of Government have beat it for parts unknown, nobody is supposed to tell where the secret headquarters are.

Federal Civil Defense Administrator Val Peterson and Defense Mobilizer Arthur Fleming will be in charge of setting up this Information Headquarters. It will be under control of the White House.

"OPERATION ALERT" may be an eye-opener on how the national news will be handled, with many of the usual lines of communication to Government news sources disrupted.

Into this Information Headquarters will come primarily news on how the Operation Alert exercise is going. This involves 50 designated cities of the 92 prime, metropolitan target areas of the United States, plus seven other cities, which will have a surprise alert, without warning.

This test will run 24 hours, beginning at 11 a. m. June 15. But here in Washington the Government will run its test for another 48 hours just to test its

own operations under emergency conditions.

In all, 15,000 out of the Washington area's 250,000 Government employes will take part in the evacuation test.

Emergency headquarters for the White House and 30 principal Government agencies will be established out of town. They will be in secret locations, 50 to 300 miles from town, in a sector that is west, northwest and southwest from the Capital.

Included in the 50 Government agencies setting up emergency headquarters for the Operation Alert test will be all ten of the Cabinet-rank departments. Also agencies like Atomic Energy Commission, Budget Bureau, Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Reserve Board and Selective Service Administration.

THERE will be no newsmen assigned to any of these agencies at their emergency hideouts—not even for Departments of State and Defense. All the news from them will be funneled into the central Information Headquarters.

There will be a press corps of 12 selected men with President Eisenhower at his emergency White House. They will represent the wire news services, networks and picture agencies. No special correspondents for individual newspapers will be accredited to the emergency White House, which may be at several secret locations.

The President may move about. But an elaborate communications network has been set up so that the President can meet with his Cabinet in conference, television phone calls. Signal Corps and Navy will handle this communication network.

The town won't exactly fold up while all this is going on. Congress will remain in session. And all the agencies will be open for routine business as usual.